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UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 04 BOGOTA 010389

SIPDIS

SENSITIVE

DEPT FOR INL/LP AND INL/RM
DEPT FOR WHA/AND

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [SNAR](#) [SENV](#) [KCRM](#) [PTER](#) [CO](#)

SUBJECT: NAS MONTHLY REPORT FOR SEPTEMBER 2005

1. (SBU) SUMMARY. During the month, approximately 7,893 hectares of illicit crops were sprayed, giving a year-to-date total of 120,101 hectares of coca and 1,546 hectares of poppy sprayed. One contract spray aircraft pilot and a Counterdrug (CD) Brigade dog handler and his dog were killed during operations in September. Over nine tons of cocaine HCL, 14 kilos of heroin, and almost 10 tons of marijuana were either captured or destroyed. END SUMMARY.

AERIAL ERADICATION

2. (SBU) During the month of September, OV-10s operating from Larandia sprayed approximately 3,150 hectares of coca; AT-802s operating from Barrancabermeja sprayed approximately 3,100 hectares of coca; and T-65s operating from Saravena and Cucuta sprayed 1,643 hectares of coca, for a total of approximately 7,893 hectares of coca sprayed. The total crops sprayed so far in 2005 are approximately 120,101 hectares of coca and 1,546 hectares of poppy.

3. (SBU) Eradication aircraft were involved in 14 incidents involving hostile fire during September, resulting in a total of 28 impacts during the month. The AT-802 and T-65 spray aircraft received significant impacts while operating from two or more Forward Operating Locations. On September 30, a T-65 aircraft received multiple hits, two of which struck the pilot, resulting in his death. Although the dying pilot, Orlando Jose Bonfante, tried to land the plane safely, he was unable to do, and the crashed airframe was ultimately destroyed on the ground.

4. (SBU) Three of the eleven eradication UH-1Ns are fully mission capable; five are in phase maintenance; and three are flyable, but no fully mission capable. Of the eleven, seven have extensive structural/sheet metal repair requirements. This situation continues negatively to affect operational readiness rates. Dyncorp's subcontract with Vertical Aviation for phase inspection of one UH-1N was successfully accomplished within established parameters. In addition, a second phase inspection was started. The eradication program borrowed five UH-1N from the Plan Colombia Helicopter Program (PCHP) to conduct spray operations. This limited the PCHP's ability to support spray operations with additional security forces.

5. (SBU) There are no replacement left-hand propellers for OV-10s. There are now three OV-10s grounded until additional blades arrive. We have ordered replacement blades from the United States, but the delivery date is uncertain. We plan to continue to upgrade the OV-10 propeller and fuel controls. One has been completed thus far.

PLAN COLOMBIA HELICOPTER PROGRAM AND INFRASTRUCTURE SECURITY STRATEGY (ISS) PROGRAMS

6. (SBU) The month of September was exceptionally busy for the Plan Colombia Helicopter Program (PCHP). One Forward Operating Location (FOL) was moved from Barrancabermeja to San Jose, while FOLs in Larandia and Saravena (in addition to Saravia's standard ISS support) continued to be operated. The PCHP also continued to support training at the base in Tolemaida.

7. (SBU) Significant events included the theft of the destroyed fuselage of UH-II tail No. 404 at an ELN roadblock in Saravena; 18 medical evacuation missions (including one evacuation of a Colombian newborn with exposed intestines); and 15 air assault missions in support of eradication that resulted in the capture of five guerillas and the deaths of an estimated 15 guerillas. A total of 2,051 hours were flown.

TRAINING

8. (U) Basic flight training continued for 12 Colombian Army officers in Florida, as well as for 12 officers at CACOM 4 in Melgar, Colombia, and 5 more officers at the Colombian National Police training school at Mariquita. During September, NAS processed a total of four Carabineros and 44

DRIAN police students to attend courses in the United States.

INTERDICTION

19. (SBU) In September, the Colombian National Police (CNP) seized over nine metric tons of cocaine HCL and coca base, bringing their year-to-date total to over 79 metric tons. Six HCL laboratories and 11 base laboratories were destroyed in the process, bringing that total to 83 HCL laboratories. In addition, one heroin laboratory was destroyed, along with 17 kilos of heroin. The CNP also destroyed 9.8 metric tons of marijuana, 42,851 gallons of liquid precursors, and 40.1 metric tons of solid precursors.

110. (SBU) During the month of September, the Colombian Army, Police, Air Force, and Navy demonstrated unprecedented levels of cooperation, conducting two short- notice joint operations against the FARC 48th Front in southeastern Putumayo department.

REESTABLISH POLICE PRESENCE PROGRAM (CARABINEROS)

111. (SBU) Three new Mobile Carabineros Squadrons (EMCARs) started training in September and graduated from the basic seven-week course at Espinal in September. Three EMCAR squadrons began the basic course at the end of September.

112. (SBU) The squadrons had a busy month during September, with armed conflicts in many departments resulting in labs destroyed, over 25,000 kgs/gals of precursors seized, and weapons and equipment captured. Precise figures will be forwarded in the next monthly report.

113. (SBU) During the previous month (August 2005), the EMCAR squadrons captured 15 narcotraffickers and 69 members of terrorist groups (48 FARC/ELN, 21 AUC). Squadrons also seized 3,551 gals of liquid precursors, 4,345 kgs of solid precursors, 183 kgs of coca base, and 75 kgs of marijuana and also recovered 5,526 gals of stolen petroleum products.

114. (SBU) In addition, approximately 1,400 EMCARs were involved in guarding manual eradication teams, and an additional 600 were providing security for the demobilization proceedings.

COUNTERDRUG (CD) BRIGADE

115. (SBU) The CD Brigade moved its Third Battalion from Barrancabermeja to San Jose Guaviare to conduct operations in support of spray operations. The Second Battalion commenced operations in Putumayo, while the First Battalion concluded training with the 7th Army Special Forces Group in Larandia. All three Battalions received training this year. During an operation in San Jose Guaviare, a mine sniffing dog and his handler fell from a UH-60 Plan Colombia helicopter from an altitude of about ten feet. Both the soldier and the dog died from trauma. This incident is currently under investigation.

DESERTER PROGRAM

116. (SBU) A total of 201 individual deserters left the ranks of the FARC (57), ELN (28), and AUC (116) in September. Under the Uribe administration, there have been 8,195 desertions to date. (These individual desertions are separate from the groups participating in demobilization.) Historically, October through December have been the months with the highest number of desertions. Currently there is one deserter every four hours. The average number of individual deserters per month has been between 250-300.

COMMUNICATIONS

117. (SBU) The completion of the 40m communications tower in Puerto Estrella leaves only the Uraba tower left to install to have commo connectivity all along the North Coast.

AIR BRIDGE DENIAL (ABD)

118. (SBU) In September 2005, 4,874 tracks were sorted over Colombia, of which 25 were declared Unknown, Assumed Suspect (UAS) aircraft. Of these, three ended in Law Enforcement end games, with three aircraft and over 1,500 kilos of cocaine confiscated and 2,200 kilos of cocaine destroyed. There were six arrests during those events.

CNP AVIATION (ARAVI)

119. (SBU) ARAVI's fleet flew 1,965 mission hours in

September. The UH-1H II helicopters flew 751 mission hours with an operational readiness (OR) rate of 51 percent. (Twenty-five percent of the Huey II fleet is in depot due to major structural repairs.) Our Bell 212 helicopters flew 150 mission hours with an operational readiness rate of 70 percent, and our UH-60L helicopters flew 169 mission hours with an operational readiness rate of 60 percent. ARAVI continues training a Colombian Army (COLAR) pilot and mechanic in the Cessna Caravan as part of the qualification requirements for the pending arrival of a Caravan to the COLAR program.

PORT SECURITY PROGRAM -----

120. (SBU) NAS provided the Inspector General of the Foreign Service, Howard Krongard, with a tour of the port security program in Cartagena during September. The NAS canine advisor traveled to Ecuador to assist NAS Quito in improving the canine unit in Quito.

POLYGRAPH UNIT -----

121. (SBU) The Police Polygraph Unit completed testing of DIRAN personnel in the port of Buenaventura. Of 96 police officers, 38 percent failed to pass the test. Testing of the Customs Police (POLFA) at Bogota's El Dorado Airport was also completed. Out of 30 personnel, 43 percent failed to pass the test.

122. (SBU) Polygraph facilities in DIRAN spaces were completed and delivered. NAS financed the construction, and ICE paid for the furniture.

DEMAND REDUCTION -----

123. (SBU) NAS personnel met with GOC authorities (DIRAN and DNE) and some NGOs to coordinate demand reduction strategies, including a common communications strategy that would meet the needs of all the different participants.

CULTURE OF LAWFULNESS -----

124. (SBU) NAS personnel met with the director of an NGO that has been working on culture of lawfulness programs, especially those programs associated with the National Police. One hundred thousand dollars of FY 2005 funds were earmarked for the police part of the program, and a little over six thousand dollars of prior year money was provided for other aspects of the program.

ENVIRONMENT -----

125. (SBU) During the month of September, NAS personnel made field visits to 150 locations in Caqueta and Putumayo departments where there were complaints of damage to licit crops by spray aircraft. Only two were found to possibly be legitimate complaints. There is a review pending by the Complaints Committee to evaluate the damage and assign compensation.

126. (SBU) In accordance with the Environmental Management Plan, environmental monitoring was done in the department of Putumayo. Soil and water samples were taken in areas where aerial spray operations were conducted to check for residues of glyphosate after spraying.

127. (SBU) The Ministry of Foreign Affairs met to evaluate a response to claims by the Ecuadoran government of damage by aerial spray on the border. NAS provided significant written material and maps to assist the GOC in defending their case.

128. (SBU) Calibration and testing of the Del Norte system were done at Larandia base with At-802 and OV-10D aircraft. The resulting adjustments should reduce the amount of collateral damage caused by spraying.

129. (SBU) Three thousand seedlings were transported to San Jose de Guaviare for an experimental coca field. Experiments on additives, production of base, leaf density, alkaloid content, etc. in the different coca plant varieties will be conducted with coca from the field.

WOOD